

# **EPA Community Involvement Training**

## **Getting the Word Out! Vapor Intrusion Case Study**



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# Today's Session

- **Who we are**
- **Site History**
- **Our Public Participation Process**
- **Exercise**
- **Take home lessons**

# Who are we?



- **The Water Board**
  - Regional agency charged with protecting surface & groundwater quality
  - Staffed by scientists and engineers
  - Inadequate resources
  
- **The Community**
  - Established residential community
  - Lived many years with risk
  - Frustrated by long process to cleanup

# Site History

- **Location – Suburban America**
- **Land Use History**
- **Regulatory Background**
- **Litigation**
- **Community concerns**
- **Water Board**



# Site Vicinity





# Site Vicinity



# Land Use History

- Former rail line and station, later used to manufacture mag wheels
- Pollutants of concern – mainly volatile organic compounds (VOCs), petroleum products, metals
- Pollutants affect soil, soil vapor, and groundwater
- Property transfer to private owner and County Redevelopment Agency

# Regulatory Background

<b>1970's</b>	<b>Solvent release (mag wheel manufacture, presumed source)</b>
<b>1989</b>	<b>Contamination discovered during property transfer</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>Lead Agency Determination</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>Water Board oversight began</b>
<b>2003</b>	<b>Site Cleanup Order issued for groundwater contamination</b>
<b>2004</b>	<b>Vapor intrusion issue discovered</b>



# Litigation Background



- Multiple law suits
  - Challenge of naming of responsible parties
  - Wide-spread concern about human health
- ➔ Confidentiality, ulterior motives, parallel process

# Community Concerns

- What is the risk to my health and my children's health?
- Are my current health problems caused by the contamination?
- How long has this been going on?
- Why didn't I know about it?
- Why aren't you doing anything about it?
- How will this affect property values?

# Water Board Challenges

- Few staff trained in public participation
- Limited resources
- History of lack of trust
- Legal and regulatory limitations
- New focus on “all pathways” only recently recognized, staff getting up to speed on vapor intrusion



# Trust Issues

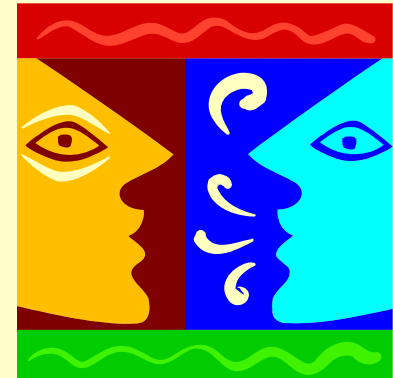
*a rough start...*

- **Delays in assigning case to Water Board**
- **Slow to recognize vapor intrusion risk**
- **Reliance on RP consultants to conduct public meetings**
- **Staff not trained to address intensity of public controversy**



# Goal of Public Participation

- Inform the public of the issues and plans for cleanup
- Have an open dialogue with the community
- Solicit input on agency/regulatory decisions via reports & documents
- Build a sense of trust and mutual respect



# Best stated by:

## League of Women Voters

*“Public participation processes can be time consuming, disorderly and downright frustrating. It is essential for everyone involved to understand that, ultimately, the awareness and support that comes from working together far outweighs the time and consternation involved.”*

# Developing a Strategy

- Understand the issues
- Identify stakeholders
- Find out more about their concerns
- Develop a plan and timeline for implementation
- Monitor effectiveness



# Getting the Word Out *on paper*

- Direct mail – newsletter and postcards
- Press releases and newspaper
- Bill stuffers
- Flyers, posters, door knob hangers
- Public bulletin boards





# Getting the Word Out *by phone*

- Dedicated information phone lines
- One-on-one telephone calls
- Community phone network
- Fax network



# Getting the word out *in person*

- Public meetings
- Board hearings
- One-on-one meetings and interviews
- Working groups
- Informal meetings

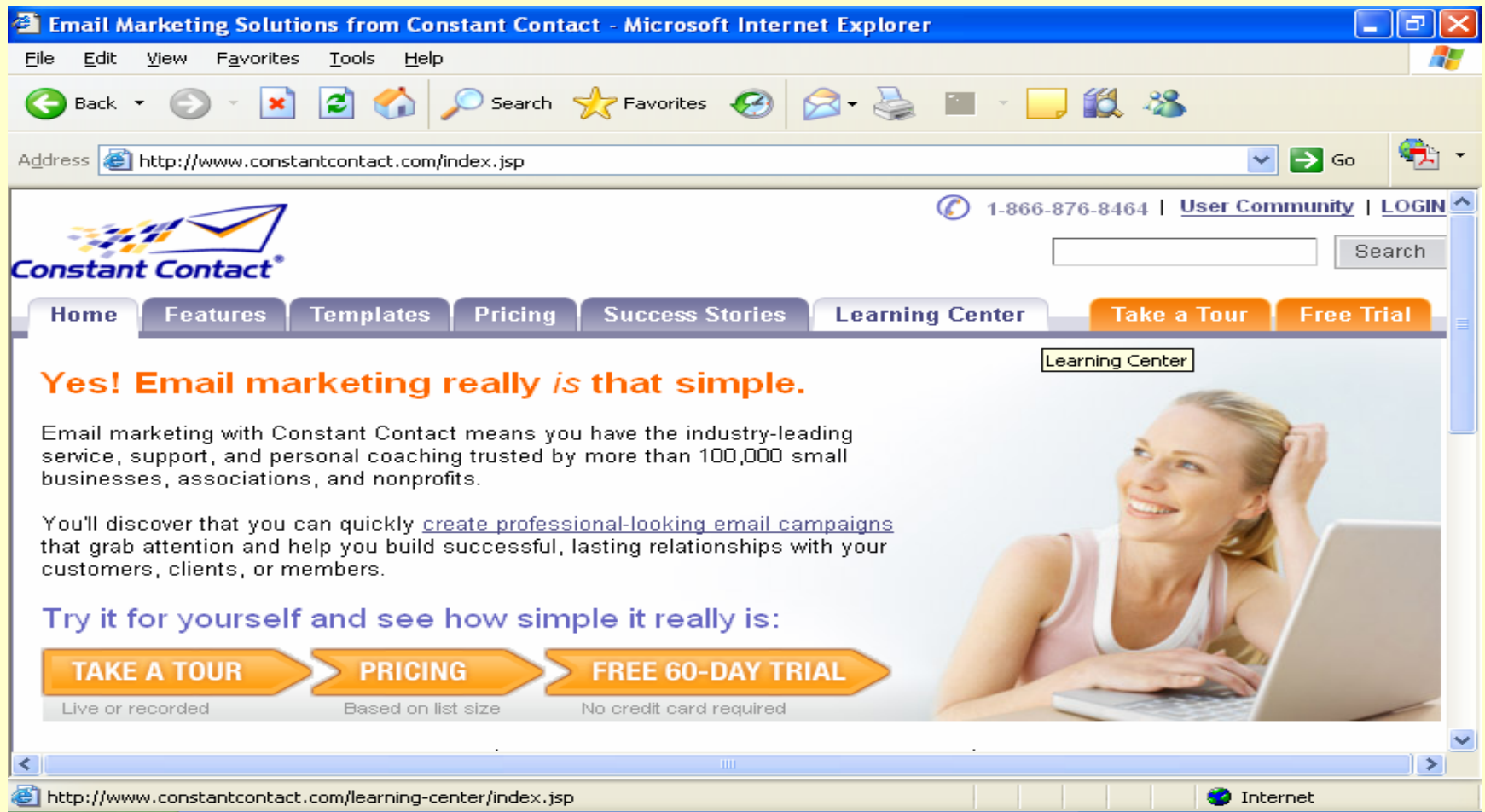


# Getting the Word Out *electronically*

- Website
- Link from other websites
- E-mail networks
- List serve



# Low-cost Electronic Communication





# EXERCISE

- Identify stakeholders
- Ways to get the word out
- Strategies: How to ...
  - be responsive
  - manage expectations
  - build trust



# Lessons Learned

- Don't ignore the public's concern (even if they seem scientifically unfounded)
- Take the lead and don't let the RP's consultant speak for your agency
- Be compassionate, responsive, and honest
- Get the word out with fact sheets, public meetings, and follow-up

# Thank You!



- For your attention
- For your continued efforts to ...
  - build understanding
  - improve public health and enhance the environment





# Conceptualized Cross Section

